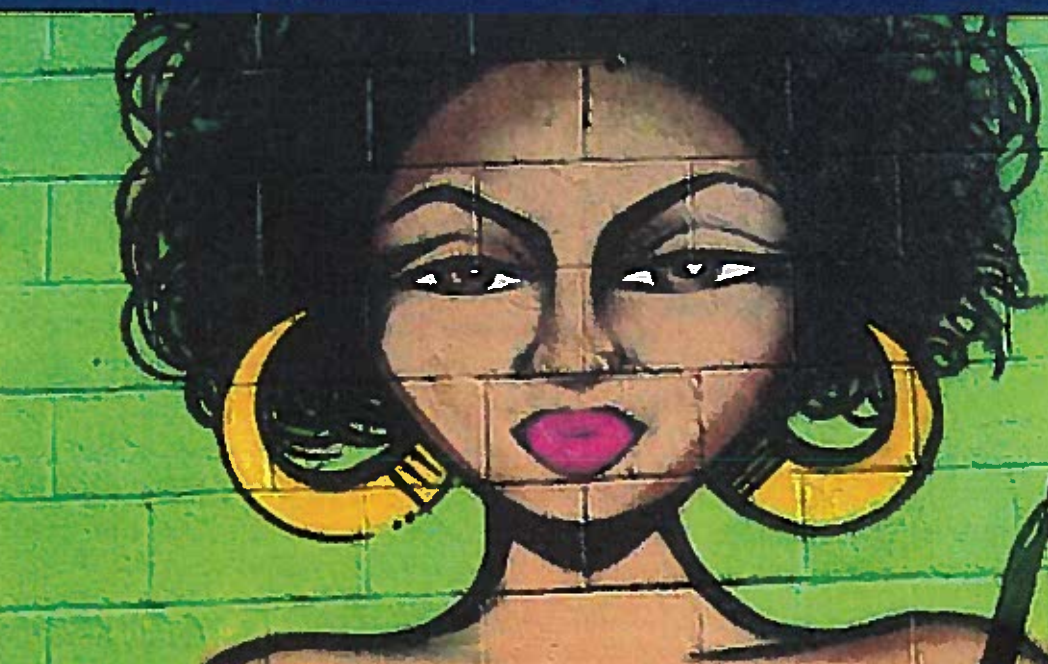


Austin — A “Family-Friendly” City:

Perspectives and Solutions from Mothers in the City



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Executive Summary

Austin is recognized as a "family-friendly" city, but is that true for all of its residents? Mama Sana/Vibrant Woman, a women's health project of Mamas of Color Rising,¹ presents community-based participatory research that calls into question Austin's family-friendly reputation for the majority of its residents. The research considers key indicators that affect the health and well-being of families and evaluates the lived experience for low-income women of color and their families in the city. The methods include focus groups and surveys as well as individual and group interviews. Taken together, the primary and secondary data provide key insights that show that race and class impact how well families thrive and even survive in Austin.

Of particular concern to Mama Sana/Vibrant Woman is the issue of maternal and infant health. Statistics show that Black women in this city and Travis County more broadly have dangerously poor maternal health outcomes. Although it is widely recognized that access to prenatal care is a key factor in determining outcomes, Black women and Latina women in Austin receive late or no prenatal care at rates two and three times that of White women. Even more striking is the wide gap between the infant mortality rates for Black and Latino infants as compared to those for White infants. Austin is known for having an abundance of birth support options and services for childbearing women. However, this abundance is not available to all women. This is especially true for those women who need them most.

Yet, improving healthcare alone will not solve these persistent maternal and infant health inequities. The health of mothers and families of color is impacted by all of the social determinants of health. Negative impacts are particularly egregious when it comes to the health of Black women and their infants. Therefore, institutional and systemic racism must be addressed in the city as a whole.

This report offers concrete recommendations to city government and to the community at large in order to move Austin towards becoming a model for equitable development. They include:

- 1) Developing and implementing an equity assessment tool to address the many structural inequities that currently exist in Austin; and
- 2) Supporting innovative demonstration projects that address health inequities affecting pregnant women in Austin.

With these strategic interventions, we can move towards ensuring that no mother's or child's life is disposable or expendable – and that Austin is truly family-friendly for all.